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Experiencing a Computer Supported College Course— “Creating Culture Identity through Food and Language: United States and China in Dialogue”

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Abstract

Computer science and network technology are bringing about enormous new challenges, opportunities, possibilities and changes to education, typically the classroom teaching-learning based on printed textbooks and blackboard, so much so that the ideology and practices of education, ranging from theoretical research on education, educational administration, curriculum development and evaluation, and construction and using of teaching and learning materials, to teaching style and methodology and learning strategy, etc., are undergoing tremendous influence from computer and network based media. I myself (Bangxiu Xie) have experienced an internationally collaborative course which was made possible by a variety of electronic media, like websites, email and voice-mail service, and skype service. The impacts of computer and network techniques upon the course cover the whole process of the development and implementation of the course.

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1. Main text

This paper includes the following 8 parts:

- Introduction
- Becoming a member of the teacher-team, emails contributing much
- The development of a course at Hendrix College, happening mostly online
- Developing teaching materials, the JJB Website mattering much
- Participating in the classroom teaching, across the Pacific over skype
- Responses and feedbacks, via campus website and emails
- Official evaluation, delivered via an email attachment
- Conclusion

1.1. Introduction

With the development of computer science and network technology, the mode of school education, typically the classroom teaching-learning based on printed textbooks and blackboard, is facing enormous new challenges, opportunities and possibilities, and is undergoing tremendous changes in different aspects, especially in the ideology and practices of theoretical research on education, educational administration, curriculum development and evaluation, construction and using of teaching and learning materials, teaching style and methodology, and learning strategy, etc. By means of global educational websites, systems and resources, computer science and network technology make it possible for people in education (administrators, teachers and students) in different parts of the world to collaborate with one another, and for the world to eliminate unnecessary boundaries between nations, encourage collaborative creativity, and help people to work together, dialogue with each other, understand each other better, share each other's traditions and cultures, and hence live together in the same world in peace and harmony. A practical case in point of such computer supported education is a course offered at Hendrix College of the US, co-taught by an international teacher-team via computer-based media, which I (Bangxiu Xie in China) have experienced in person.

During the last three weeks of May, 2011 (from May 16th to June 3rd, 2011), at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, the United States, in light of the "FEELS"ⁱⁱ curricular hypothesis I put forward, Professor Jay McDaniel and his international teacher-team have designed and implemented an experimental course — "Creating Culture Identity through Food and Language: United States and China in Dialogue (May 2011)" (shortened as "the Dialogue Course" below). This course came last in a series of learning projects consisting of three individual courses that Hendrix College has offered to students there. The two courses coming before it were in Sociology (Food, Nature and Culture) and English (as a Global Language). After taking the two preceded courses, students continued to pursue relevant ideas and knowledge by taking this three-week long course, which was co-taught by a teacher-team composed of teachers from both the United States and China.

Nevertheless, "the Dialogue Course" didn't merely lie in abstract concepts, but further existed in the lively experiences of classroom teaching and learning. During the three-week period of time when the course was going on, members (faculty and student participants) of this curricular community had classes in the classroom for three hours (9:00 -- 12:00 a.m.) every morning. Then, for two hours (4:00 -- 6:00 p.m.) on most of the afternoons during this period of time, members of the community interacted lively in different forms of practical activities, in which they exchanged ideas, experiences and feelings about languages and cultures, shared different traditions and customs about food, and cooked and tasted typical and traditional food

ⁱⁱ Xie Bangxiu. FEELS -- A Constructive Postmodern Approach to Curriculum and Education.
<http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/feels.html>.

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